

MUHARRAQ / MANAMA, Bahrain

Location: Manama/ Muharraq, Bahrain
Type: Downtown revitalization
Year Design: 2006
Status: In Progress/Planned
Size: 400 Hectares/ (Manama),
500 Hectares/ (Muharraq)
Planning: Duane Phillips

Working with the United Nations Development Program and UNESCO, the Kingdom of Bahrain instituted a program to regenerate the traditional neighborhoods of the cities of Manama and Muharraq. Duane Phillips of DPZ Europe joined the program as the urban design consultant and consultant coordinator, contributing to strategic planning initiatives and collaborating on a rewrite of the cities' building and historic preservation codes.

Throughout Bahrain and the Persian Gulf, traditional courtyard houses of coral stone and plaster had been demolished at a widespread rate in order to make way for new structures. The Manama and Muharraq program addressed this problem, aiming to create a plan that would allow for sensible growth while preserving the cities' cultural heritage. To approach this challenge from an interdisciplinary standpoint, consultants specializing in law, economics, urban design, conservation, and information systems worked together to create integrated proposals addressing architecture, urban development, city infrastructure and historic preservation. These proposals were designed to enable the owners of the individual buildings to modernize while conserving the original scale and aesthetics of the streetscapes. In addition, these measures intended to attract Bahraini middle-class families and ultimately reinvigorate the cities' historic centers.

Elements explored in the program include public and private financial programs, conservation zoning laws, architectural guidelines, proposals for new government structures, and proposals for new elected bodies to administer the design measures. To address other issues relevant to Manama and Muharraq, the program also explored alternative solutions to problems with inheritance laws and overcrowding.

The economic regeneration of the two city centers has been planned in phase with certain goals identified for the short, medium, and long term. Altogether the process is expected to take 7-10 years.

